

WORTH READING

How Wars Are Won The 13 Rules of War - From Ancient Greece to the War on Terror

Bevin Alexander
Crown 2002

Reviewed by Scott Curthoys, a Counterintelligence Analyst contracted to a federal agency and retired Army Military Intelligence and Foreign Area Officer.

The now famous photograph of a Special Forces soldier on horseback in Afghanistan (probably with a laptop in the saddlebag) has been heralded by some as a symbol of the way America will fight future wars. These arbiters of the future envision military operations carried out by small units, enabled by advanced technology, working with local fighters and creating effects out of proportion to their numbers. Bevin Alexander, in his newest book *How Wars Are Won*, places himself squarely in the camp of these “visionaries.”

The events of September 11, 2001, Alexander claims, dramatically changed the face of war. Instead of standing militaries equipped in a manner that mirrors the United States, America now faces a new kind of adversary that uses new types of weapons, follows different tactics and embraces unrecognizable ethics. Alexander argues that we are witnessing a “true revolution in warfare” resulting from the combination of accurate, powerful weapons and the realization that modern conventional armies can be defeated by guerrilla methods. He writes that the “Traditional fire-and-maneuver tactics of individual military units, whether infantry, artillery, armor or a combination of the three, are now out of date.” Old military structures, as represented by regiments, battalions and companies, will fade away. In their place, Alexander argues, will be swarming pods and clusters of troops, working with aerial pods, and emulating guerrilla tactics in an effort to defeat terrorists and guerrillas. The commanders in this new structure will use techniques and principles that have proven successful since ancient times. In *How Wars Are Won*, Alexander attempts to elucidate what he considers to be

the key rules of war and identify the ones likely to be most relevant in future combat.

Alexander devotes a chapter to each of his 13 rules, organized into an introduction, historical examples and a section called “Implications for the Future.” Several of the author’s rules parallel the war principles found in Joint Publication 3-0, *Doctrine for Joint Operations*. The experienced reader will recognize economy of force in the author’s discussion on “holding one place and striking another” and economy of mass when he writes about “landing an overwhelming blow.” Despite teasing several of his rules out of the better known principles, Alexander still offers the soldier food for professional thought.

Two rules especially stand out in light of recent operations in Afghanistan and Iraq. The first is “blocking the enemy’s retreat.” Although Alexander gives his treatment of this rule a cautionary orientation (lines of communication and withdrawal will be cut, so only use units of a size that can be supplied or evacuated), the failure to block Al Qaeda and Taliban forces from withdrawing into Pakistan in late 2001 gives strong credence to this being a maxim for victory against unconventional foes. In “driving a stake in the enemy’s heart,” Alexander argues that future battlefield victory will depend on air attacks against an enemy’s centers of power followed by a swift occupation of the enemy’s heartland by small, select forces. Alexander even offered a suggestion for defeating Saddam Hussein by inserting a force into southern Iraq to seize the oil fields. Deprived of its source of wealth, the author opined, Hussein’s regime would collapse. Needless to say, it wasn’t that easy, but coalition forces did drive a stake into the heart of Hussein’s regime by quickly seizing key points around Baghdad, followed by the capital itself.

Many readers might leap to each chapter’s end where the author discusses future implications inherent in each rule. However, it is through the historical examples in these chapters that the reader gets a sense of the author’s real strength — his understanding of military history. Examples include battles such as Quebec (1759) and the Kum River Line (1950), and some campaigns like Italy (1796-97) and the Schlieffen Plan (1914). Alexander seems to milk each historical vignette to provide context for his rules. Some are very applicable, such as MG William T. Sherman’s march across Georgia (1864-65) and MG Winfield

Scott's march to Mexico City (1847) as examples of "driving a stake in the enemy's heart." Other examples, primarily from battles less familiar to most, require the reader to stretch his imagination.

The book is marred by two faults. The first is Alexander's penchant for unsupported, matter-of-fact pronouncements of his opinion. For example, he states that "Rommel was the only true military genius to emerge in World War II." In addition, he asserts that U.S. victory in the Pacific in World War II was achieved by air power alone. There are undoubtedly several soldiers, sailors and marines who might disagree. What is more unforgivable is the occasional editing error, especially errors concerning historical fact. At one point, Alexander misidentifies the commander of the 8th Army in Korea in 1950.

Although this book is not destined to be a military classic and despite the occasional injection of jarring opinion, the book is a solid read and a good addition to any professional bookshelf.

Technology and War: From 2000 B.C. to the Present

Martin van Creveld

The Free Press, New York, 1991 (Revised)

Reviewed by Geoffrey French, a Counterintelligence Analyst with General Dynamics and former Logistics Specialist for the U.S. Marine Corps Reserve.

Innumerable authors have written about various aspects of how war has influenced technological development or how a certain technology had an effect on a battle, campaign or war. Each example demonstrates that the two phenomena are clearly intertwined, but no single example illuminates the entire relationship between the two. Few authors try to explain the relationship, in part, because it is highly complex. War certainly pushes technology, and many have argued that technology can push war. This barely scratches the surface, however. Indeed, even the purest civilian technology affects war, and war touches and affects so many parts of life that its influence can be

seen on seemingly unrelated technology. Although the topic is daunting, Martin van Creveld treats it comprehensively and in detail in his book *Technology and War: From 2000 B.C. to the Present*.

Van Creveld, a historian and lecturer at the Hebrew University of Jerusalem, approaches the topic by several paths. First, he looks at the relationship over time, which is the foremost way that the relationship becomes clear — changes in technology can be so profound that they make war at one point in history quantitatively distinct from war at another. In the book, van Creveld divides military history into four epochs. The first two epochs are obvious: the age of tools, where human and animal muscle provide the force behind all technology deployed in battle; and the age of machines, where gunpowder becomes the more important source of energy in battle in small arms and artillery.

The second two epochs represent growing complexity: the age of systems and the age of automated war. The age of systems refers to the time after 1830, when railroads and the telegraph linked people and places as never before. In this period, a military's strength was a product not of the hardware it employed, but of how well its hardware was integrated into a system. As a quick example, at the onset of the invasion of France, the French army had more tanks that were superior to those of the Germans, but had not integrated them as well into strategic thought or military organization. The final epoch, the age of automation, follows 1945 when systems of machines required computerized or automated control to quickly and accurately react to battlefield environments.

In each section, van Creveld addresses the means and trends in battle on land and sea (and air, when appropriate) as well as the infrastructure of warfare. This latter topic allows the author to pursue such phenomena as the impact of paper supply on war (imagine leading an army without the ability to write instructions or refer to a map). By examining the technologies that improved logistics and administration, he shows how technologies thought to have purely civilian usefulness can make a profound impact on the battlefield.

The final chapter of each section explores technology to an even greater degree of abstraction. It looks at trends across time that are closely related to technology, but

tangential in many ways. These subjects include professionalism in the military and the use of irrational aspects of technology such as aesthetic designs, which can become so elaborate as to interfere with the actual function of a weapon system.

The result is a remarkably thorough book that examines innovations and trends from a number of different perspectives. The author masterfully compares events across history to show patterns and examine theories such as whether a certain technology favors the offense or defense. Readers should keep in mind that *Technology and War: From 2000 B.C. to the Present*, like many of van Creveld's other books, requires a certain level of military history knowledge. He does not describe battles or events in detail, but rather refers to them, depending on the reader to understand them, their context and significance. The result is concentrated writing, rich from his ability to compare battles and commanders from the Americas to Asia an authoritative work on a complex topic.

CONTRACTING COMMUNITY HIGHLIGHTS



Welcome to a new segment from the Deputy Assistant Secretary of the Army for Policy and Procurement (DASA(P&P)). I am pleased to introduce this informative section that will highlight the Army's new contracting policies and initiatives as well as showcase some of the Army's accomplishments within the contracting community. Each issue will offer a feature article, a section recognizing our contracting professionals and information regarding career development opportunities.

This issue's feature article, "Contractors Accompanying the Force — The Clause," is about a topic that has gained a lot of attention in recent months. As contractors increasingly deploy with our soldiers, our contracts must include the necessary language to cover logistical, operational and contractual issues. An Army Federal Acquisition Regulation Supplement (AFARS) clause was

written to provide top-level instructions for deploying contractors and to increase consistency in Army contracts on this issue. The AFARS clause was scheduled for publication in the *Federal Register* as an interim rule in late August.

Contracting Professionals. It was my pleasure to attend the *2003 Acquisition Senior Leaders' Conference* in Seattle, WA, which was attended by more than 300 acquisition professionals. A conference highlight was Assistant Secretary of the Army for Acquisition, Logistics and Technology Claude M. Bolton Jr. presenting the Secretary of the Army Awards for Excellence to contracting professionals. Congratulations to the following award recipients:

MAJ Willard G. Zbaeren - U.S. Army Japan (U.S. Army Pacific Command), 9th Theater Support Command, Okinawa, Japan
 Yvonne S. Land - U.S. Army Materiel Command, Anniston Army Depot, Anniston, AL
 MAJ Scott F. Bruner - Directorate of Contracting, Fort Campbell, KY
 Phyllis Y. Poyhonen - U.S. Army Space and Missile Defense Command (SMDC), Huntsville, AL
 Dr. James J. Rich - U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (COE), Baltimore District, MD
 Lynn M. Selfridge - SMDC, Huntsville, AL
 MAJ Stephen J. Conaway - U.S. Army Forces Command (FORSCOM), Fort Drum, NY
 Pamela Runyon - U.S. Army Contracting Command Europe, Grafenwoehr, Germany
 Brigade Combat Contracting Team - U.S. Army Tank-automotive and Armaments Command (TACOM), Warren, MI
 Residential Communities Initiative and Project Development Team - COE, Washington, DC
 Team Award for Installation Contracting Center - Fort Hood Contracting Command, Fort Hood, TX
 Team Award for Installation Contracting Satellite - Fort Campbell, KY
 COL Charles J. Guta - FORSCOM, Fort McPherson, GA
 Kathleen T. Walk - U.S. Army Communications-Electronics Command (CECOM), Fort Monmouth, NJ
 Barbara G. Maxwell - Army Contracting Agency, Fort Dix, NJ, and 63rd Regional Support Command, Directorate of Contracting, Los Alamitos, CA